

# Chapter 1: Introduction

This report is one of a series that describes the results of the 1994-95 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE). The emphasis here is on recreation activities for which public land management agencies supply various outdoor recreation opportunities in the United States. The specific orientation is toward the U.S. Forest Service and its administrative regions.

It is amazing to see how important recreation has become and predicting demands for recreation is increasingly difficult. In the past 13 years, the number of participants in most outdoor recreation activities have increased, placing greater demands on existing recreation resources. In addition to the increase in the total number of participants, the client base is changing as well. Because of this, recreation resource managers are faced with increasingly difficult challenges of satisfying user demands.

Because outdoor activities provide a sense of vitality that may not be available indoors, we expect many people to attach increasing importance to outdoor activities. Some Americans think of themselves as tennis players, golfers, hikers, and anglers rather than as accountants, lawyers, sales agents, and computer operators.

## Survey Methods

The 1994-95 NSRE was conducted to discover and describe: (1) participation by Americans in outdoor recreation activities, (2) favorite activities and constraints on participation in them, (3) uses and values of wildlife and wilderness, (4) attitudes about recreation policy issues, (5) outdoor recreation patterns and needs of people with challenging and disabling conditions, and (6) recreational trips people take away from home. NSRE data will be used by a variety of public and private organizations for various purposes. The emphasis in this report is on the regional and demographic usage patterns across various outdoor recreation activities throughout the United States. This report will therefore assist public land management agencies in the provision of corresponding recreation opportunities, services, and facilities.

The NSRE survey was comprised of two random-digit-dialing (RDD) telephone surveys. In the first survey, with a target sample of 12,000 Americans above the age of 15, people were asked questions in four areas: (1) participation in activities and the numbers of days and trips spent in recreation activities, (2) the characteristics of recreation trips, (3) barriers and constraints to outdoor recreation, and (4) alternative strategies for charging user

fees for recreation. The average length of interviews for this survey was 20 minutes.

In the second survey, the target sample was 5,000 Americans above age 15. People were asked about their participation in specific outdoor recreation activities and the benefits of that participation. Each respondent also was asked questions in three of five additional randomly assigned modules: (1) favorite activities and barriers and constraints to participation in them, (2) wilderness issues, (3) wildlife issues, (4) awareness about public land management agencies, and (5) freshwater-based trips. For each of the randomly assigned modules, sample size was approximately 2,500.

In both surveys, respondents were asked if they had a disability or challenging physical condition. If the answer was positive, additional questions about accessibility of recreation areas were asked. If respondents indicated that a disabled person other than themselves lived in the home, the disabled person was contacted and interviewed at a convenient date.

Data were collected from January 1994 through May 1995. A total of 17,216 interviews were completed—12,214 for survey one and 5,002 for survey two. One goal of the first survey was to have valid samples in each of eight regions in the United States. A minimum sample size of 900 was set for regions 1 through 7 and a minimum of 400 samples was set for Alaska. The Nation's population is heavily concentrated in the Northeast and the South, so individuals in these regions were proportionately under represented in the first survey. Samples for the second survey were based on population distribution, so almost 47 percent of the samples were in the Northeast and more than 30 percent were in the South.

## Sources of Error

State-by-state random digit dialing was employed to sample households across the country. This approach, however, reaches a random sample of telephone numbers, rather than of people. Affluent families are virtually certain to have a telephone number and many have more than one. At the other end of the affluency scale, many low-income households may not have a telephone. As a result, affluent people may have been over-represented somewhat in the survey sample. Demographic characteristics of the NSRE sample are compared with 1990 Census estimates for individuals 16 and above in Table 1.1. Differences in age, race, and gender were adjusted for over- or under-representation during data analysis.

**Table 1.1**—Comparison of the NSRE survey sample with 1990 Census of Population Estimates.

Category	NSRE Proportion of Sample	1990 Census of Population Proportion
<b>AGE</b>		
16-24	15.1	17.2
25-29	9.0	11.1
30-39	23.9	22.0
40-49	19.6	16.5
50-59	12.8	11.5
over 60	19.5	21.8
<b>RACE</b>		
Caucasian	85.3	81.9
African-American	6.3	11.1
American Indian	1.0	0.73
Asian Pacific Islander	1.5	2.8
Other	5.9	3.4
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	42.6	48.0
Female	57.4	52.0

In viewing the results presented in this report, it is important to remember that individuals were asked about their personal participation in specific recreation activities. But they were also asked about the characteristics of their households. Thus, when we report the relationship of family size to rate of participation, the percentages given represent the proportions of respondents in various sizes of households who participated in specific activities.

## Activities, Singly and In Groups

Questions were asked about participation in 68 specific outdoor recreation activities. For some of these activities, there is a subset of more specific types of that type of activity. For instance, cross-country skiing is one of the 68 activities, however, participants were also asked what type of cross-country skiing they participated in (i.e., skiing on groomed vs. ungroomed trails, backcountry skiing, etc.).

For analysis and description of results, it was useful to place these activities into 13 groups, or activity headings. Numbers that describe participation in major activity headings may include participants in activities not specifically listed under that heading. For instance, the heading "Outdoor team sport activities" may include more than the seven activities specifically listed.

For simplicity, each activity was placed in only one category. In many cases, however, activities could have

been placed in more than one category. Bicycling, for example, was classed as a fitness activity, which it is for many people. For others, however, bicycling might best be classed as an outdoor adventure activity.

Percentages in the tables were obtained using the results of the 1994-95 NSRE. Number of participants in the tables are based on those percentages and U.S. Census estimates of the number of persons in the country 16 years or older for the survey period, winter 1994 through spring 1995.

The activity groups and the individual activities surveyed were:

### ***Fitness***

- Running/jogging
- Bicycling
- Long distance biking
- Walking

### ***Individual sports***

- Golf
- Tennis

### ***Outdoor team sports***

- Baseball
- Softball
- Football
- Basketball
- Soccer
- Volleyball
- Handball

### ***Outdoor spectator activities***

- Concerts
- Sporting events

### ***Viewing or studying***

- Nature centers
- Visitor centers
- Prehistoric sites
- Historic site
- Bird watching
- Wildlife viewing
- Fish viewing
- Other wildlife viewing
- Sightseeing
- Visiting a beach or waterside
- Nature study near water

### ***Snow and ice activities***

- Ice skating
- Snowboarding
- Sledding
- Downhill skiing
- Cross-country skiing
- Cross-country skiing/groomed trails
- Cross-country skiing/ungroomed trails
- Backcountry cross-country skiing
- Snowmobiling

***Camping***

- Developed area
- RV developed camping
- Tent developed camping
- Primitive area
- RV primitive camping
- Tent primitive camping
- Other camping

***Hunting***

- Big game
- Small game
- Migratory bird

***Fishing***

- Freshwater
- Saltwater
- Warmwater
- Coldwater
- Ice
- Anadromous
- Catch and release

***Boating***

- Sailing
- Canoeing
- Closed-top canoeing
- Open-top canoeing
- Kayaking
- Rowing
- Floating, rafting
- Motorboating
- Water skiing
- Jet skiing
- Sailboarding/windsurfing

***Swimming***

- Surfing
- Swimming/pool
- Swimming/lake, river, ocean
- Snorkeling/scuba

***Outdoor adventure***

- Hiking
- Hiking to a summit
- Orienteering
- Backpacking
- Backpacking to a summit
- Mountain climbing
- Rock climbing
- Caving
- Off-road vehicle driving
- Horseback riding
- Horseback riding on trails

***Traditional social activities***

- Yard games
- Picnicking
- Family gathering